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VERSES

BY

RANSOM JUDD POWELL

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Verses

by

Ransom Judd Powell

To My Friends—My Kindly Critics

These simple verses are presented, with no claim of literary merit. They express the lights, the shadows and the diversions of the period of stress through which we have just passed. If, in some slight degree, they awaken a sympathetic response in the heart of any other, I am satisfied.

R. J. P.

Minneapolis, Minnesota
December 9th, 1918

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Old Glory

Hark the song! Like a mighty wave it surges on.
'Tis the song of the brave hearts, and true.
Let us join in the chorus as it rolls along;
To our country let us pay our homage due!
Let us sing of our faith in splendid victory;
Of the flag that we all love to see.
Let us hail Old Glory!
'Tis the flag of the brave and free.

Loving peace, hating war, we dwelt in amity;
Honest judgment and faith was our guide;
When the Teuton, with merciless barbarity,
Shocked the world, and flung his challenge far and wide.
Not content to demoralize humanity,
To destroy all the progress of time,
He would stain Old Glory,
Starry banner,—the flag sublime!

Slow to wrath, we had hoped the storm might pass away,
That the war-maddened monarch would pause,
E'er he trampled on ev'ry right, and forced the day
When with others we must join the common cause.
But he broke every promise, and with infamy
Stamped us craven, and slavish and base,
And declared Old Glory
Sailed the sea only by his grace.

Then Columbia awoke, and from the hill and plain
Sprang the millions to answer her cry;
Quick to strike down the savage, and avenge the stain
Cast upon her by his insult, or to die.

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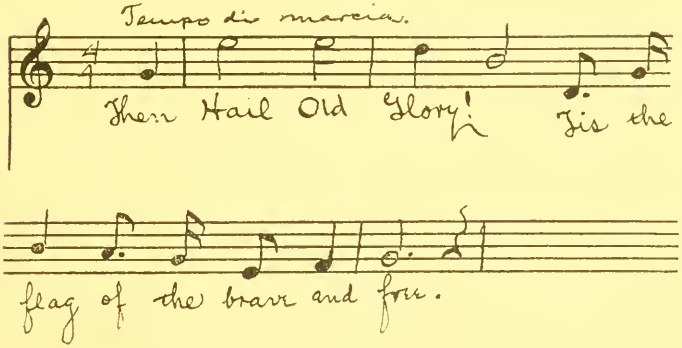
For the flag that we love was never known to bend,
Nor before any monarch to bow,
And our proud Old Glory,
Shall not trail under insult now!

When the foemen who sought with pride to rule the
world
Have been crushed, and their mad purpose stayed;
When the base crew that 'round the earth their chal-
lenge hurled
Have been punished, and their ravages repaid;
When the great war is done, and shouts of victory
Thrill the air through the wide ether dome,
We'll embrace Old Glory,
As our brave boys come marching home.

At the shrine of the fallen we uncovered bow,
'Neath the flag they have hallowed again;
Firm resolved that the cause be not forgotten now;
That our sons and men shall not have died in vain.
They were heroes, and freely made the sacrifice;
Proud the nation whose sons are so true!
Homage from Old Glory
To our boys is forever due.



A Mother's Prayer

He stood on the steps of the car that day—
My one soldier boy had been ordered away—
And the smile in his eyes was so cheerful and strong
That I knew I could trust him—he'd never go wrong:
My boy with eyes so brown.

I answered his smile with a brave "God speed,"
And we talked commonplaces—of things he might need;
But the eyes of my soul saw him starting alone
To tread duty's path through the Great Unknown:
My boy with eyes so brown.

I saw him in danger on earth and in air.
The crashing of battles—I pictured him there.
I heard the guns thunder, the rifle's sharp crack—
And I dreaded to think he might never come back:
My boy with eyes so brown.

The duty that called him, I know—I commend.
Our blood and our treasures we yield to the end.
But Oh, God of Battles! Through danger and stress
Please bring back my boy—he is all I possess:
My boy with eyes so brown.

Carry On!

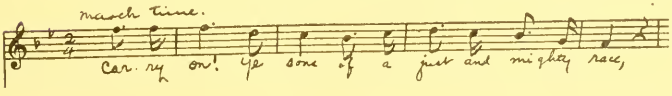
Round the earth a mighty slogan echoes loudly,
"Carry on! Carry on!"
To the call our great Columbia answers proudly,
"Carry on! We'll carry on!"
We were slow to wrath—by nature peaceful;
But we're in it now with brain and brawn.
Like a giant engine working, never halting, never shirking,
Till the end of time, we'll carry on!

How the patriotic battle cry has thrilled us!
"Carry on! Carry on!"
How the patriotic sentiment has filled us!
"Carry on! We'll carry on!"
Like a fiery blast the test has bound us;
East and West and North and South, we're One.
And the spirit of our Nation is a power through all creation,
While in wisdom's path we carry on!

O'er the sea our gallant boys are bravely calling
"Carry on! Carry on!"
In the battle's awful crash our sons are falling;
Leaving us to "carry on."
They are giving all for our salvation,
For the glory of tomorrow's dawn,
When from ocean unto ocean, with a pride in their devotion,
We united stand to "carry on!"

Chorus:

Carry on! Ye sons of a just and mighty race,
With a cheer for the Red, White and Blue.
Carry on! Defeat we shall never, never face
If we one and all are brave and true.

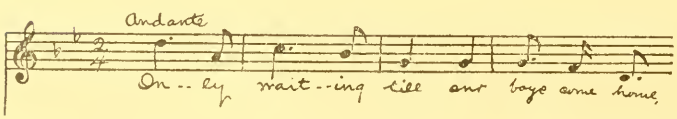


Only Waiting

One day in a vision there came to my side,
An angel of wisdom,—with wondrous smile.
He drew back the veil whose dark draperies hide
The world's deepest thoughts for awhile.
I saw men as actors—all playing their parts.
Our boasted achievements so great
Are merely diversions, for deep in our hearts,
We wait—we only wait.

The mothers and fathers with sons in the fray—
I saw them throughout all our wide domain.
I saw their activities day after day;
Their hopes and their fears and their pain.
In shops or at home, in the office or field,
In wealth or in poverty's state,
In every action their hearts are concealed;
They wait—they only wait.

We wait. And each day with its news of the strife
Brings a deeper emotion, a keener distress.
Each one saw his boy go away full of life,
But our fearful forebodings we cannot repress.
We hope for the dawn of that wonderful day
When the arrogant foe, face to face with his fate,
Sheaths his sword in defeat. For this wondrous array
We wait—we pray and wait.



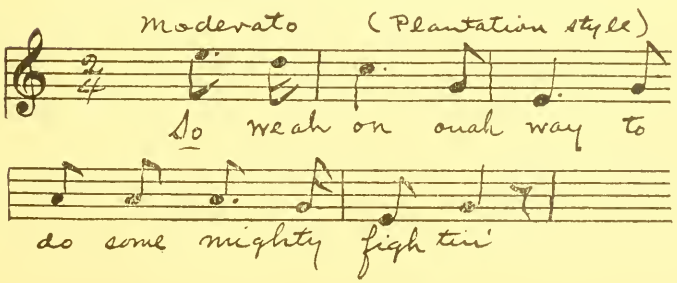
We're On Our Way

A Colored War Song

We'ah duh dusky sons ob Uncle Sam,
An' we'ah off to Ge'many to fight.
We come f'om good old Alabam',
An' many othuh places what is striben fo' duh right,—
So we'ah on ouah way to do some mighty fightin'.
He'ah we's a-comin' a million strong,
An' dar'll shuah be sumpin' doin' wid duh cullud boys along;
'Cause we'ah on ouah way to help wid duh rightin'
Ob all dis great big fuss—an' punish eb'ry wrong.

Eber since Abe Lincoln set us free
We has waited patiently fo' dis.
An' now de oppo'tunity
To show ouah 'preciation is a chance we wouldn't miss,—
So we'ah on ouah way an' may duh Lawd fo'gib us,
Ef we don't go an' fight like mad,
Jes' to show duh Boss a fightah what he didn't know he had,
'Cause we'ah on ouah way, no one can say dey drib us;
We voluntee'ahd an' he'ah we a'ah—an' mighty glad.

Uncle Sam, he look'd—an' he sez, sez he,
"He'ah's a job dat's badly needin' did."
So he called fo' his boys to cross duh sea,
Den some ob duh white fellows run away an' hid,—
But we'ah on ouah way, we don't know whe'ah we's goin',
Excep', when Uncle Sam say go.
Dis he'ah niggah's gwine to hustle and to strike a mighty blow,
Fo' we'ah on ouah way; we heah de ho'n a-blowin';
It's callin' us to come and conkuh eb'ry foe.



Song of the Rookies

The Hun tried to squeeze Uncle Sam from the seas,—
he was foolish as fools can be.
Our weakness, he said, would make us dread the anger
of Germany.
They thought that because we regarded the laws, we
were cowards and would not fight.
So they went—right—out—to—sink ev'rything in
sight.
Then old Uncle Sam got mad and called for all the
boys he had,
And all the ships and guns and things from ev'ry-
where,
He sent the regulars to France, and gave the Nation's
Guard a chance,
And then he yelled for us,—and here we are!

Chorus—

We are the Rookies bold, the soldiers of Uncle Sam.
We come from lands of ice and snow, from lands of
the rice and yam;
But we can "hay-foot-straw foot" handle and shoot a
gun.
We'll never quit till Bill is It, and the war is won!

The day we enlisted, a doctor assisted by medical men
galore,
Endeavored to find out ev'ry kind of things we had
had before.
They stood us in rows and they counted our toes, and
they stripped us from foot to head,
And you should—have—heard—the—things that those
doctors said.
"Here's a Mutt, a perfect Nut;" "He's much too fat,"
and all of that;
While all around those doctors chased us to and fro.
They pulled our tongues and swelled our lungs, and
tried our eyes in ev'ry size,
And then they said: "You're it, and you can go!"

When we were measured, the things that we treasured
were taken away and hid.
We thought it was rough and rather tough to treat
us the way they did.
They put us in uniform, fashioned in cuniform,
banded our legs in spats,
And they sent—us—out—with girdles around our
hats.
People shout when we turn out, and dogs and chil-
dren run about,
While all the girls, they greet us with a smile of joy.
They hand us strings of socks and things, and every
one a sweater brings,
While all around they're yelling: "Atta Boy!"

They sent us to camp, and we had to revamp all our
previous views of things.
We thought it immense to live in tents, and have the
free life it brings.
But in spite of our hunches, they took us in bunches
and herded us into shacks,
Then they sent—us—out—to dig up the railway
tracks.
Doctors we had hoped to shun, but there we found
them every one;
The pills and squills they fed us was an awful shame;
They vaccinated us with dope, inoculation made us
mope—
But we began to like it just the same.

The Sergeant who drilled us with merriment filled us,
to see the cute way he had
Of swinging his hands to give commands, and cussing
when he was mad.
We learned to maneuver and also to "Hoover," to fight
and to be prepared,
And you—should—see—us "dig in" when we are
scared.
We can cook and handle tools, and also shoe the army
mules,

While every one can tinker with a lot of things.
Afternoons we sail balloons, and also whistle all the tunes
Of all the pieces everybody sings.

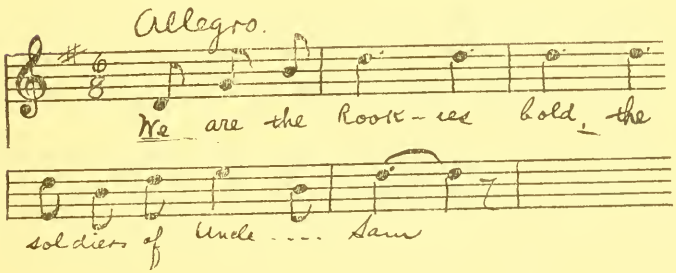
We were put in a company where they could dump any kind of a man they found.
We had Russians and Medes and Poles and Swedes, and men from the Norton Sound.
There were Irish crusaders and far-away traders from Greenland and Trinidad,
But they—could—fight—whenever you got them mad.
Some were clumsy in their gaits, and few could talk United States,
But they were with us to the bitter end, you know.
Though they could not understand, we gladly took them by the hand,
And soon a common spirit seemed to grow.

They gave us our chance, when they sent us to France, with a Captain who knows no fear.
He is canny and wise and always tries to cheer us when danger's near.
When the enemy shells us, our Captain just tells us to "dig in" and lie down flat,
But you—can—bet—he's there where the danger's at.
He was never known to swear, but he will lead us anywhere,
To strike our mighty enemy his greatest joy.
In a fight, 'tis his delight to cheer his men with all his might,
And do it while he cares for every boy.

One day we were digging and patching and rigging a road, when a gang of Huns
Came over the top, and tried to mop the earth with your Uncle's sons.
Each threw down his shovel, and fought like the devil —they "beat it" for safety soon.

And we camped—right—in—their trenches that afternoon.
Every Hun, he dropped his gun, and Holy Moses! How they run!
While all around the cannon roared on every hand.
Through the battle's awful blast, we beat the Boches back at last
And then sat down to listen to the band.

When they told us to "Hop," we went over the top with a whoop, and away we ran.
The Boches said: "Wait! And let's debate till we fix up a peace again."
We answered: "Nay, nay, Fritz, we cannot delay, for we're after your Kaiser's crown."
And we marched—in—to—Berlin as the sun went down.
Everybody on the street came crowding in for things to eat.
While all they had to offer was a hearty song.
The Kaiser brought his sons and things, and said: "Behold the coming Kings!"
But we said: "Get your hats and come along!"



Welcome Home!

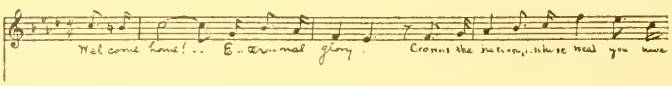
Bravest and best of the sons of our nation!
Mark how they sprang when the war cry was sounded;
Eager for service in every station;
Quick to defend what our forefathers founded.
Crownéd with victory, homeward they're pressing.
Hearts beating high while their coming we wait.
Join in the chorus of welcome and blessing.
Hail our young manhood—the masters of fate!

Bravest and best of the sons of our nation!
Mark how they fell while the battle was roaring.
Gone to the "west" land—the soul's destination.
Noblest of offerings—freedom's outpouring!
Hark to the Great Commandant over yonder,
"Come! Take your place with the great of the past."
Through Heaven's arches celestial choirs thunder,
"Welcome! Thrice welcome! You're safe home at last."

* * *

Welcome home! We long to greet them.
Unconfined be our joyful emotion.
Welcome home! We haste to meet them,
Proud to hail our boys again,
Welcome home! Was ever nation
Bless'd with manhood of such devotion?
Ring the bells! Shake the earth with a mighty cheer
For our boys—our sons and men!

Welcome home! Eternal glory
Crowns the nation whose weal you have cherished.
Welcome home! Repeat the story
Of a duty done so well.
Welcome home! Your task is over.
Till the last of your race has perished,
Of your gallant defense of your nation's right,
Sons of men will love to tell.



A Tribute

The following lines were suggested by the tragic experience of a talented young gentleman who tried again and again to enlist among the combat troops, but was forced at last to accept service behind the lines with a non-combatant division. He died in the service, and some wonderfully fine verses found among his papers revealed his spirit —a limited service man, with a heart and courage for unlimited achievement.

A lion heart, by fate decreed
To go through life, and be denied
The joy that comes from mighty deed.
Of hero size, and yet he died
Unknown to fame; his will to lead,
Unnoticed, cast aside.

In vain he sought to serve his state
Where warriors meet—where battles roar.
Grim war's decree, unkindly fate,
Denied his quest and barred the door,
Except to limited, sedate
And thankless service—nothing more.

A warrior spirit, doomed to fret
Behind the lines in lowly sphere:
A service commonplace, and yet
He served with pride; his record clear.
Why should we grieve with vain regret?
Revealed he stands, a warrior's peer.

Do souls of men just melt away
Like dewdrops under summer's sun?
Does death conclude the spirit's sway,
Or has its life at death begun?
The span of life would scarce repay
The birth of souls such race to run.

Be this our creed: Life's narrow cell
Was not designed to circumscribe
A soul's ambition. He who fell
Belonged by right to warrior tribe.
The angels yonder, who can tell?
On warrior rolls his name inscribe.

The Quest

Peter William Tecumseh Guy Mortimer Brown,
(He was called Peter Guy by the folks of the town)
Was a diligent reader and searcher for news,
And on every topic he bristled with views.
He read city papers and country ones too;
He was fond of athletics; the market he knew,
But he searched them in vain for a thought of true worth,
And he said "Has the Editor vanished from earth?"

To make sure he was right he decided to go
And investigate houses where newspapers grow.
So he went to the Journal or Tribune or News,
Or the Pioneer Press, or the Post if you choose,
(For you know this Tecumseh Guy Mortimer Brown
Is a character common in every town)
And he drifted right through from the roof to the ground.
You'll be shocked when I tell you what Mortimer found.

There were great printing presses and type-casting things,
With a few old compositors, 'round whom there clings
Quite an atmosphere mystic—reminding of days
When the newspapers moulded and guided our ways.
There were "devils" and messengers, typists and clerks,
And a room where the artist pretends that he works,
But the man who gets "ads" from the stores—though unseen,
Is the boss of this great advertising machine.

In a room set apart for reporters he found,
Quite a lot of young fellows just loafing around.
(Though he freely admitted they had the right stuff
And could wield mighty pens if encouraged enough.)
There were some they call "editors"—why I don't
know,
For they spend all their time making room for the flow
Of weird advertisements. Of thoughts they have few,
Except commonplaces—presented as new.

Soon he came to a place quite apart from the rest,
Labeled "Managing Editor." Finding his quest
Led him to it, he knocked and presented his case
To the keeper, who took him right into the place.
"Tell me, pray," said our Guy to the man at the desk,
"Why, in all this assemblage of things picturesque,
You've employed every thing with the greatest of
pains,
Except independent and untramelled brains?"

Then the man took a match, and he scratched it and lit
A long black cigarette—then he smoked it a bit,
While he owlishly surveyed Guy Mortimer Brown,
Till at last he replied, with a shrug and a frown,—
"My young friend, don't you know in the newspaper
field
Nothing counts but the stuff that will bring the most
yield.
Advertising, my friend, is the work of the Press.
Nothing harmful to trade dare we ever profess."

Peter William Tecumseh Guy Mortimer Brown,
Groped his way to the steps, then he staggered on
down
Till he came to the street, where he turned and looked
back

At the home of the newspaper, filled with its clack.
With the bedlam of noises and fuss in his ear,
He said, "Now, I own, it is perfectly clear
That so long as the merchants demand all the space
No expression of thought has a chance round the
place."

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